

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

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PSALM 1

I have often heard it said that the crooked people prosper and the good people remain poor. It may be true that the rich people live in their fine houses while we pay their mortgages, and they drink their champagne while we pick up the tab; but, according to Psalm 1, that is not the 'rest of the story.' The rest of the story is written in Scripture. Psalm 1 is the way God writes the story.

(Psa 1:1 KJV) Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

(Psa 1:2 KJV) But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

(Psa 1:3 KJV) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

(Psa 1:4 KJV) The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

(Psa 1:5 KJV) Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

(Psa 1:6 KJV) For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Last vs of Ps. 2: Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Clearly, the Bible says that the righteous will be rewarded. I know that the righteous will be rewarded in Heaven. Jesus told us that in one of His parables about the poor man who received crumbs from his masters table. When he died, he went to the bosom of Abraham in Paradise. But the rich man, who had been so selfish and covetous, who refused to help the unfortunate and considered his riches his good fortune, died and went to hell.

(Luke 16:23 KJV) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

(Luke 16:24 KJV) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

(Luke 16:25 KJV) But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

The wicked will be rewarded with hell, and the righteous will be rewarded in heaven, for Lazarus was comforted and Dives tormented in the flames.

But what about this life? Are not the righteous rewarded in this life? Or, do the righteous suffer in this life that they may have wealth in the life to come? The answer is somewhat complex, the righteous do suffer, but they are rich and their riches consist not of financial prosperity as the preachers of prosperity believe. Their riches are 'true riches' because they are both what human beings truly want, even if they do not know it, and what

human beings truly need, though they may not realize it. These truths are implicit in Psalm 1, the Psalm of a Righteous Man.

I. IN THE FIRST PLACE THE PSALMIST GIVES US A DESCRIPTION OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN.

All of us know that the Bible declares us all to be unrighteous, when compared with the true righteousness found in Christ who was the Image of the Perfectly Righteous Heavenly Father. But the Psalmist speaks as a man of God whose idea of righteousness was enhanced by his own relationship with God. He therefore has the Holy Spirit giving Him a description of the Righteous Man. And..

A. He Describes Him, first, from the Negative Standpoint—In a word, What the Righteous Man is Not.

1) He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. Though negatively put, the Psalmist is saying, “Get your advice from Godly people, not from the ungodly; and walk in the advice of the Godly.” If you remember this is just the problem that Rehoboam, the son and heir of King Solomon. He took the counsel of the ungodly, and that counsel brought division and ruin to both Israel and Judah.

(1 Ki 12:4 KJV) Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

(1 Ki 12:5 KJV) And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

(1 Ki 12:6 KJV) And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

(1 Ki 12:7 KJV) And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

(1 Ki 12:8 KJV) But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

(1 Ki 12:9 KJV) And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

(1 Ki 12:10 KJV) And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

(1 Ki 12:11 KJV) And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

Good men can be wrong too; but one is far better off to listen to men of morality, integrity, ethics, principles, and values, than to take the counsel of someone whose self-interests, or immoral purposes destroy good judgment and common sense. A good man with common sense is better than a hundred biased intellectuals, just as a good boat that stays afloat is better than any ship with holes in the hull. When I need counsel I do not go to people of questionable or limited character, but I first go to God, then I go to the Bible,

then I ask my good wife, and then I speak with good people. But, the greatest counsel we can walk in is the Counsel of the Bible, the Counsel of Jesus, and the Counsel of the Holy Spirit.

2) The Righteous man does not stand in the path of sinners. In a word, the righteous man neither takes the counsel of the wicked, nor does he choose the wicked as his companions. One of the greatest mistakes young people make is to become companions with other young people who have little or no moral values. Many a life has been lost by being companions with others you care about who care little for morality, and little also for you. I know a young man whose addictions were brought about by his being a companion with an older man whom he respected who was an alcoholic. He started drinking and taking drugs himself, and soon all his friends were the people like himself who were addicted to drugs. He went through rehabilitation several times, but each time he returned to his old neighborhood where his old friends lived. Each time he came back he started staying around his old companions; and each time he did that he became as bad or worse than he was before. Had he had a different location in which to live, and had he chosen different friends, he would have, I think, overcome his addiction.

Your walk, if you are righteous, must be with other people who share your values. If you are a Christian, you should have friends who are in the world to help them get into Christ; but, beware, your major circle of friends should be other souls who, like you, were redeemed, and are now on the road to recovery through Jesus Christ the Lord. Do you remember what your parents used to tell you about 'running around' with the wrong crowd? They would say, "Birds of a feather flock together." Then they would remind you that if your friend committed a crime and you were with him, you too would be put into jail for the crime.

3) The righteous man walks, stands and sits, and even lies down like other men — only he does so appropriately. He does not sit in the seat of the scornful. Isn't it interesting how those who sin love to condemn the same sin in others. Martha and I were watching the John Edwards interview in which he confessed his infidelity. Then a barrage of journalists started scorning the senator and very harshly judging him. I turned to my wife and said, "I suspect that the journalists judging Edwards are just as guilty." The venom we spew at others comes from our own poison glands. Judging others and scorning others may make us feel superior morally, but it makes us less moral in the sight of Him who said, "Judge not lest you be judged." We can learn an important lesson from the Titanic regarding our trivia of scorning and judging others:

"When the unsinkable Titanic sank, warning after warning had been sent to tell them they were speeding into an ice-field. But the messages were ignored. In fact, when a nearby ship sent an urgent warning, the Titanic was talking to Cape Race about the time chauffeurs were to meet arriving passengers at the dock, and what menus were to be ready. Preoccupied with trivia, the Titanic responded to the warning: 'Shut up. I am talking to Cape Race. You are jamming my signals.' "

The Interpreter's Bible gives us a summary of the negative example of the righteous man in regard to the sinful world around him: "He does not follow their advice, plans, or pattern of life." May that describe our lives.

B. Then, the Psalmist Describes the Good Man from the Positive Standpoint.

1) He Delights in the Law of the Lord. What does he mean by he Law of the Lord? The *Broadman Bible Commentary* says, "Law. here means, .the instruction, teaching, guidance, even the revelation of Yahweh." The Righteous Man really does enjoy the Bible. What does your joy come from? Does it come from God? I remember going across Caney Mountain with my good friend, Dave Slone, at that time in his mid 80's. We were in the church van, delivering food in the 'Meals on Wheels' program. I asked him something about how he felt, and he said this to me, "I hardly ever feel good anymore with all my problems brought on by the years." Then his face brightened and he said, "The only time I really feel good is when I'm in church worshipping the Lord." What a testimony that was. Dave's delight was in worshipping God

2) Not only does this man Delight in reading the Bible, he delights in Meditating on the Word of God day and night. The Psalmist is probably thinking of Joshua to whom God said, (Josh 1:8 KJV) "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Do we believe these words? Do we believe this promise, made not just to Joshua, not just to this Psalmist, but to all believers? If we do, let's delight in the Word of God, meditate on it, memorize it, and glorify God by so doing. God's Word to man is man's True Wealth.

I came upon this illustration yesterday. Many people mistakenly think they can find contentment in the things of the world. A wealthy employer once overheard one of his workers exclaim, "Oh if I only had a hundred dollars, I would be perfectly content." Knowing that his own money had not given him inner peace, he told her, "Since I would like to see someone who is perfectly contented, I'm going to grant your desire." He gave her the money and left, but before he was out of earshot, he heard her remark almost bitterly, "Why on earth didn't I say \$1,000?" The boss smiled, for he had made his point that money doesn't make a person "perfectly contented."

II. NOW WE WILL LOOK AT THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

A. First of All, the Righteous is Blessed. He is happy! According to the *Interpreter's Bible* this can be translated 'O the Happiness of.' His happiness is beyond description. Remember [John 14:27](#)! "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Someone once asked where happiness came from and concluded:

Not from Unbelief—

Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Not in pleasure —

Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure, if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Not in money —

Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in position and fame —

Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood, a struggle; old age, a regret."

Not in military glory —

Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept, because, he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where, then, is happiness found? The answer is simple: In Christ alone. He said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man can take from you." [John 16:22](#)

B. Oh the Happiness of the Righteous Man! Indeed a positive note! But, the Positive Runs through the Life of the Righteous. In [Psalm 1:1,2](#), the Psalmist describes the righteous analytically; in verse 3 he describes him in imagery; and in verses 4-6, he describes the righteous man by contrast:

1) He is Permanent. The Psalmist uses the analogy of a fruit tree, and, according to the commentaries, this tree is planted by 'streams' of water, meaning, they contend, 'irrigation ditches.' But that is not all. The word 'planted' really means 'transplanted,' as if some Great Gardener had gently taken that tree, transplanted it, cared for it, irrigated it, pruned it, and gathered fruit from it. Surely that is a picture of redemption, and a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do for each of us in giving us Eternal Life. The Reward of the Righteous is knowing that the God in whom you Trust is Eternal, and that in His Son Jesus, the Risen Lord, you also have Eternal Life

2) He is Rooted. What a contrast is that with the wicked who are like chaff, blown about by the wind, who cannot stand in the day of Judgment. The sad thing is that all their lives they have been amusing themselves at the ignorance and stupidity of the righteous, when all along they were themselves ignorant and stupid. Someone once defined real

failure as:

“...living without knowing what life is all about, feeding on things that do not satisfy, thinking you have everything, only to find out in the end you have nothing that matters.”

That is a good description of the world we live in. Most people aspire for things that matter not; Christians look to things which alone matter.

After a hurricane a few years ago, a commentator asked a Christian lady about her losses. She looked at her shattered home, and all the things she had in it lost, and then she said, “I never put my trust in things that can blow away. I put my trust in God.”

3) He is Fruitful. Being by a constant source of water, and having a constant source of sunshine, nutrients and care, assures this righteous man that he is truly the victor. However, his victory is in Christ, in whom he dwells.

A few years ago, the Associated Press released a study done by an agricultural school in Iowa. It reported that production of 100 bushels of corn from one-acre of land, in addition to the many hours of the farmer's labor, required 4,000,000 pounds of water, 6,800 pounds of oxygen, 5,200 pounds of carbon, 160 pounds of nitrogen, 125 pounds of potassium, 75 pounds of yellow sulphur, and other elements too numerous to list. In addition to these things, which no man can produce, rain and sunshine at the right time are critical. It was estimated that only 5% of the produce of a farm can be attributed to the efforts of man. If we were honest, we'd have to admit that the same is true in producing spiritual fruit.

Where does our fruitfulness come from? Obviously it comes from being related to God.

(John 15:1) I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

(John 15:2) Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

(John 15:3) Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

(John 15:4) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

(John 15:5) I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

We must always remember that fruitfulness is the reward God gives us for Righteous Living. Everything we have and all we own has been given to us. As our lives reflect the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we are given by our Gardener and Caretaker the supreme opportunity of being His fruitful servants. We will be truly successful. But let us remember what Jesus said, “The branch (tree) cannot bear fruit of itself. . .no more can you except you abide in me.” So then, the Christian, inasmuch as he is fruitful, is permanent, is rooted, and is extremely happy, is the truly successful person. The Righteous Man is, in fact, the only truly successful person. He is rewarded in this world; he will be crowned in the next.